

R E M A R K S

ON THE

1508^X/1208.

S E C O N D A D D R E S S

O F

The COMMITTEE of ASSOCIATION for the
County of YORK, to the Electors of the
Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, within
the Kingdom of GREAT BRITAIN.

To which are added

CONSIDERATIONS on the Petition of the COUNTY
DELEGATES to (what is called) PARLIAMENT,
in the Session of 1781.

ADDRESSED TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,

By the Rev. THOMAS NORTHCOTE,
Chaplain in the Royal Artillery. ^K

L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year M DCC LXXXIII.



MR. NORTHCOTE'S REMARKS

ON THE

Second Address of the County of

Y O R K, &c.

L E T T E R I.

THE pamphlet which I have lately published on the equal rights of the people to election and representation, I flatter myself, hath substantially answered, while it anticipated the argument of this plausible Address. Under that conviction, and from my long labours in the popular cause, I fear I am become a little "*pertinacious*" in my opinions, and shall not readily submit to be silenced, either by the reasoning or the authority of this Committee. Especially when I perceive a great want of accuracy calls for correction, and repeated fallacies put the reader on his guard, instead of recommending implicit acquiescence. It is not my intention to cavil; neither my principles, motives, nor arguments require it. But I object to a lax, indefinite use of words, by which common readers are led to confound ideas of the most opposite nature, and very few are on their guard against artful insinuation, however false; or confident assertion, however groundless.

I am the more inclined to make this remark, because under the first kind of imposition, an unwarrantable latitude of expression, a part of the *electors* of a county are constantly called *the people*, with the apparent design to pass upon the unguarded public,

a party plan for that of the people. Of the other species of deception which I have mentioned, can a more glaring instance be required than in the 15th page, where it is affirmed, that the political principles of the two plans had an entire agreement, and differed *only* from considerations of a prudential nature? By which we are taught to understand, that restoring the rights of the whole people, and continuing to usurp them, are the same principle.—That equal and universal representation are the same idea with partial and limited.—That to guard our own rights, or to leave them in the power of others, are tantamount expressions; and a parliament that *does*, or *does not* represent the nation, is a word of the same import, and the same *thing* in reality and effect.—That it is a matter of prudence in the people to abandon without a struggle the great objects of prudence, their rights and property.—That discretion teaches the *great* body of the people to be peaceably ruled and robbed by the *less*—and that no fool-hardiness can be greater than for nine-tenths, or even four-fifths of the kingdom to demand their rights of the government, when no change it can effect in their condition can possibly be for the worse. These are little arts, but they may have considerable effects. They shew how great respect this Committee entertain for the authority of the people, that they cannot consent even to invade and betray their rights, but in their own name. They will have a popular association, though it be against the people; and a reformation too, of the corrupt parliament, by the means of their old friends the venal electors; to whom (as they mean to establish them in the stolen rights of the people) they with *equal* justice and propriety apply the name.—It will perhaps be thought a little severe in men possessing *moderation*, thus to make the boroughs cast influence, and compel corruption



corruption to be its own executioner. But ridiculous as this attempt must appear, there is no other power of reformation remaining, if, as is affirmed in the first paragraph of the Address, "the nation have lost the right of controul" over the government, with the ancient right of election, and be now *de jure*, as well as *de facto*, at the disposal of the rotten boroughs.

Two or three Royal Thieves having robbed the kingdom of its most sacred and essential property, the patriotic Committee of the county of York, taking the lead in political reformation, are pleased to give a sanction to the theft, and to countenance the criminal receivers, instead of encouraging and supporting their injured country in its recovery. They do not hesitate to declare, that the rights which precede and create lawful authority, may be annihilated by usurpation.—This is indeed very *moderate* reasoning as well as reforming! Can it be imagined that so intelligent and learned a Committee could really adopt so gross an error? Must we not rather suppose they wanted to get rid of a system of rights not easily *managed*, and applied to the purposes of a state faction, and by one stroke, surely not a moderate but a most unmerciful one, which cuts down and disables the great body of the people, even from the natural powers of self-preservation? If the nation have indeed *lost* the great primary fundamental right of election and representation, and the same power of the Crown can with equal authority assume all its other rights at discretion; on what ground do these gentlemen complain of a power, to which they would make others, their equals, submit? Or with what justice or decency can *they* talk of reforming it, when they, in effect, hold it can do no wrong, by making its worst tyrannies binding upon the people? If the great majority of the kingdom can
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have lost its rights by arbitrary disfranchisement; are not all the rest more justly lost, and forfeited to the Crown by corruption, and by the shameful acquiescence of the constituent body in its depredations upon their country? But not to push them too hard upon so unguarded a part, I will only remark, that this Committee must have been under the influence of an absurdity, or presumption, not usual to *Englishmen*; who, disclaiming and resigning the public rights as lost, because violated, pertinaciously continue to petition Government for an addition to those which have been so often sold to the Crown, and paid for by the people; — that very people whom they would finally deprive of their rights; that they might continue to fleece of their property. But if this great oppressed body have a due sense of their value, and of their own importance, they will seize the present favourable crisis, when Administration is sinking under guilt and despondency, and the national spirit rising in proportion, to do themselves justice. Their claims are not less just or sacred than those of America or Ireland, although the spirit of both reproaches them with double disgrace for being more wanting to themselves and their posterity. Degenerate as we are, such a defection from the public cause of national rights will not be attributed to timidity, but to treachery; when the virtuous part of the community is doomed to fall a sacrifice to the corrupt; when a great popular assembly, as they would be thought, do not blush to publish their *despair* of the commonwealth, and to abandon the rights of the whole community for a compromise on behalf of a party.

I shall not enter into a refutation of all the specious arguments of this performance, but shall slightly remark upon those arts, by which dissimulation and duplicity labour to mislead. In one part
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of the work it is affirmed, " that the more enlarged popular plan has great and perhaps insurmountable difficulties."—Yet it grants " the mass of the people to be yet untainted by corruption, animated with the zeal of their ancestors, and enlightened with perhaps a superior knowledge of the nature and end of government."—Why then, it may be asked, are the tainted mass of partial constituents to be retained and cherished, while the sound body are rejected? Had they not been separated by the arts of corrupt policy, the whole people had been at this hour equally untainted, because the means of corrupting them could never have existed. And that extended election which alone could prevent the infection from reaching the great body of the people, can only prove a radical cure where it now prevails. If then the mass of the people be untainted, " and their integrity and attachment to the constitution may be relied on with as much confidence as ever," where is the danger, or the impracticability of the plan that would preserve this integrity and public virtue from all future infection? But these gentlemen fallaciously confound, in this same paragraph of the 7th page, the body of the electors and the mass of the people. The latter have no controversy with the Crown;—*they* have presented no petition by their *own* representatives, for representatives they had none; nor could they petition at all, since it is confessed " that no association was formed on their plan."—So much may serve as a specimen of the Committee's fair reasoning.—Their policy is no less *honest*, that could cut off all the sound members of the community, and retain the corrupt and depraved, in order to preserve the health and vigour of the civil constitution.—But granting their hundred new knights, like a piece of new cloth in an old garment, could be added to the old rotten representation,

sentation, will these gentlemen say that such botching of the constitution would be restoring it? There are indeed professed patriots, the open advocates of pensioned and placed senators, who may possibly think corruption the *spirit* of the constitution, as well as septennial parliaments a *ground-work*. But I should think the hundred knights, whose chivalry attempted to take his prey from the dragon of corruption without first driving the monster from his den, better calculated for the lists of Quixotism than the Herculean task of parliamentary reformation. To what purpose then, but that of deception, are the great body of the people introduced into such a plan of reform, to be witnesses to their own disgrace, where inveterate corruption, and the hereditary traitors to their country from generation to generation, are preferred, not only to the incorrupt, but the *incorruptible*, as the great body of the people are allowed to be in the first page of the Address? where we are told "parliament in its original form was admirably fitted to resist the attack of corruption; when the *right* of election *annually* vested in the body of the people a regular and complete *controul* over their trustees."—But wherefore are the rights of the whole people granted in their fullest extent again and again, and the necessity of these rights confessed for the great purpose of national controul upon government, if they are at last to be sacrificed to the intrigues of ambitious men, who, as long as they can use the people's rights as the sole key to their property, will never find it expedient or practicable to countenance or assist in the recovery of them. In fact, the great body of the people are introduced merely to amuse the reader with the notion of their being parties concerned. Whereas the whole dispute lies between the Crown with its venal creation the Boroughs, and the Aristocratic Body with

with the freeholders of the counties. Their dispute is for the power;—they are perfectly agreed to keep the nation under, by preventing the recovery of those rights which would clip the wings of both, and keep them within the limits of their constitutional authority: and for this reason we see too much virtue, and too close reformation, no more agrees with the system of opposition than of the government. If the one employs ministers not of the purest morals, or the most unsullied character, for purposes well adapted to such an administration; the other gives the preference to a corruptible representation before an incorruptible, and, to add an emphasis to the hypocrisy, under a plan of reformation.

And if this be not sufficiently accounted for to the reader, by the "*circumstances and habits* of the nation," (words of the utmost complaisance, equally accommodated to all understandings, times, and opinions) he must have an unusual degree of incredulity, which utterly disqualifies him for the argument, and the purpose of this address.—The authors have given us, in the first six pages of it, the birth, parentage, and education of parliamentary corruption; but they prudently left it to the people, to obtain its last dying speech and confession.

Having been accessory to many wicked pranks and unlawful proceedings of this old offender; such as robbing free citizens of the * *means* of self-defence—knocking some on the head for † *meeting* to complain of their injuries—and wickedly attempting to ‡ *bind* others in all cases whatsoever—it is no

* Alluding to the Game Laws.

† The Riot Act.

‡ The Declaratory Act.

wonder the party have a fellow-feeling, and wish to defend him from the punishment he merits.

It is for this reason that the body of the people are constantly brought forth in the Address, with no other end, that appears, but to guard and protect this old useful corps, the body of corruption. Yet in the 8th page we are told, "It is by the weight of a general association, the body of the people must regain their lost influence over their trustees." Surely this is gross mockery of the people, if, as they affirm, *their right of election be lost*, and the recovery impracticable. It is insult to them to talk of *their trustees*, who confessedly have had none for ages past, and by the moderate plan are never intended to have any. But though abandoned by the great party in opposition, and their garbled county committees, this great simple body are given to understand, in the same strain of derision, "that it would be slavish timidity for *them* to acquiesce and submit under such a perversion of the end for which parliament was instituted;" while, on the other hand, to meditate schemes of resistance would be fool-hardy rashness.—There is a medium, it seems, betwixt submitting and resisting, not adapted to great bodies; to batter the ears of administration with an unceasing war of words, till the strong fortress of corruption be given up to tropes and figures of rhetoric, rather than to fool-hardy blows. To avoid which, ministers are to be told beforehand, as an inducement for them civilly to give up their power, that there is neither spirit nor intention in the nation to bring them to account for the most arbitrary and destructive abuse of it.—I fear it is not very necessary for these moderate reformers to throw cold water on the public zeal, or resentment of their fellow-citizens.—There does not appear to be any great danger from these at present; but much more
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from an unfeeling languor, a timid selfishness, or a torpid despair. But it seems the county petitions to the boroughs, the supplications of England to a few sycophants in office or contract, backed by Nabobs not yet brought to justice by law, or *conscience*, are to look big, and swagger upon occasion. Be not alarmed, gentle reader, at the pomp of preparation, with which the whole Associated Body are "to pour in one unbroken current upon the corrupters of our Government."—It is not to "besiege, but to *beseech*."

What business the great body of the people will have in this grand cavalcade, who are, at all events, to get nothing by it, does not appear; unless it be to grace the triumph of corruption at the fresh sacrifice of a hundred more knights upon her polluted altars: for whatever has been said, for their own amusement, by the great advocates of reformation by œconomy, to pluck the Crown bare of its appendages, and purge both houses of parliament from pensions, places, subscriptions, contracts, &c. it was surely ridiculous to think of introducing œconomy by the means of her mortal enemies, Prodigality and Corruption: or that the Crown would patiently suffer the most wanton *innovations* on its ancient honours and revenues, while the enormous plunder of a ruined nation by a profligate paymaster, and many other harpies of the State, was winked at with the utmost indulgence, in hopes of its changing hands.

But, indeed, this system is given up by the address as impracticable and absurd, when corruption is become the avowed principle of Government; which, as the Committee justly observe, is "the consummation of its depravity, and ruin its inevitable consequence, unless the due controul of the constitution be restored to the *body of the people*."—Mistake

not—they mean only the *elective* people, to whom their hundred knights are to restore this controul, not, as is fallaciously pretended, the body of the people. For though they own the absurdity of attempting to reform the Government by a corrupt Parliament, they are for reforming Parliament by Electors equally corrupt, only sprinkling the rotten boroughs with a little fresh salt of county independence.

REMARK

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R E M A R K S

ON THE

Second Address of the YORKSHIRE COM-
MITTEE.

L E T T E R II.

BUT we are now coming into the marrow of the moderate plan, and the cloven foot of party steps forth with less disguise from the cloak of hypocrisy. It is affirmed, page 15th of the Address, "That the diversity of sentiments, which has in some measure retarded the union of the people, arose not from a difference of political principles, for in them there is an entire agreement, but solely from considerations of a prudential nature. The questions in debate have been, not whether those doctrines be maintainable in argument, for it is admitted they are, but whether it be probable in the present state of the nation that those doctrines, in their full extent, are reducible to practice?—And if it be highly improbable that a reformation on that extensive plan could be carried into execution, whether it be not expedient that the people waive somewhat of their justifiable claims, and content themselves with that mode of redress which is less complete in theory, but which appears more easily attainable by peaceful means, and, when attained, fully adequate to the purpose of their opposition?" This is artfully begging

ging every part of the question by subtle insinuation and bold assertion. It is not true that the political principles of the two plans of reformation have an entire agreement. On the contrary, they differ as widely and essentially as two plans can differ that are in favour of opposite interests, that of an aristocracy and the rights of the nation; that would place the government in the hands of a party, or bring it under the constitutional controul of the whole people, through an uncorrupt and *incorruptible* parliament.—This is not “waiving somewhat of the people’s justifiable claims,” as is jesuitically insinuated. It is an utter renunciation of *all* their rights and claims in favour of a partial reform; in no respect adequate to any purpose of theirs, or to any right or interest of the nation at large, as is with equal untruth and effrontery affirmed.

The next paragraph, calculated to intimidate the popular leaders by an exaggerated description of the power of the crown, and the difficulties in the way of their plan, from national habits and prejudices averse to *innovation*, is in substance, and in many places, verbatim, the same artful attempt formerly made use of to gull the freeholders of another county, in a letter to a *leading Member of the Committee*. There can be no doubt of its *author*, through whatever channel it may have been conveyed to its present use, or by whatever means adapted. It will allow superior efficacy to the more extensive scheme, if under the “*present circumstances*” of the nation the establishment of it could be accomplished; but taking the contrary for granted, with the usual artifice, it asks with an air of triumph, what is the superior efficacy of an impracticable system? I answer, there is nothing so difficult as what men do not *wish* to accomplish; nor any thing too difficult for a united and determined people to effect. Especially when
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they are allowed by their opponents to have virtue, numbers, and strength, to support *justifiable* claims, we are utterly at a loss for those peculiar circumstances of the nation, that must defeat their just hopes and efforts, unless they are betrayed by false brethren to the usurped powers of a limited crown.

It is a strange conclusion which these gentlemen draw from *extreme* corruption, to a *moderate* reform; and a singular plan, to retain all the instruments of corruption, the more certainly and effectually to subdue it. It looks as though their party had no great objection to the corrupt system, provided they could only have the more discreet Discretion of it themselves; and it is with this view that they confine their reformation to enlarging the freehold representation, where their interest lies, rather than restoring the constitution with the rights of election. A people united by a common interest, and in a constant exercise of equal rights and privileges, could not be governed by the intrigues, or for the interests, of a party. The leaders of all parties which must be annihilated by such a plan, will for that obvious reason eternally reprobate the reform, under any specious pretences that may best impose upon the public.

To prove the truth of this observation, we need only repeat the silly objections which distressed artifice is compelled to produce as serious arguments in the dispute. In the first place, we are told, "the adherents of corruption would brand the popular system with the odious name of *innovation*."—And pray where is the disgrace to honest men of being branded by adherents of corruption? Or if innovation, which is the parent of all excellence, could really be *odious* to any but blockheads or knaves, what could be the odium of innovating upon a system of tyranny and rapine? Let us hear no more, for decency's sake, of the scruples of such rogues, or the tenderness
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which others express for them, who would be thought honest. — But there is another difficulty, which one would think common-sense should blush to mention. “A new distribution of the election franchises into more hands would appear injurious to a multitude of electors.” There is no rascal, however abandoned, under the denomination of a corrupt elector, and traitor to his country, that would dare to mention such an injury. Nothing but the distress or the effrontery of party could have given birth to it. — But it is added, “Such a reform would be a total departure from the present establishment of the lower house.” The very thing it ought to be, when the present establishment of the lower house is a total departure from every thing honest, legal, and constitutional. — But still the objections proceed, “It might alienate many by the magnitude of the operation, whose private interests were not materially affected.” — Alack! what a misfortune to the nation! I see no remedy, unless these gentlemen will learn a greater way of thinking, which will square their ideas to the magnitude of the operation. — But the danger and the argument persevere; and we are next alarmed lest “more should be alienated by its contrariety to the manners of the age.” Amiable tenderness to vice and folly! how admirably adapted to a moderate reform! Yet, I am persuaded, it would be the less evil of the two, for the age to mend its manners, rather than the nation to lose its rights and liberties. But still, heaven preserve us! the catalogue of dangers increases — “It might offend the pride of the wealthy, excite the fears of the moderate, and shock the prejudices of men unaccustomed to political speculation.” — And surely if, in the “*present circumstances*” of the nation, so fully explained in this account, pride, fear, and ignorance, are of no weight in the balance of argument, that predominate on most

most other occasions, there is no respect remaining for ancient usage and custom; but this wicked innovation is to throw all established order and good government into confusion. To sum up this argument against the popular plan, what does it amount to, but simply this? You ought to be very cautious how you reform too much—for the adherents of corruption will be offended at innovation. The thief of public rights will not like the thoughts of restoring them. Fools will gape at the novelty—Pride will take it in dudgeon—Fear will be more afraid—and Ignorance worse confounded. And all these fools, knaves, and cowards, being in the interest of the Crown, or of Party, “the liberties of the nation (if they could be found) would be in imminent danger of ruin,” by attempting to extend franchises out of the limits of corruption to honest men, who certainly cannot be supposed to know their *value* so well as those who have long *dealt* in and made a market of them.—Far from being satisfied with this reasoning, the great body of the people think they have at least as good a right to sell themselves, and their country, as the little corrupt body, who have seldom known any other value of the abused trust, but to make the most of it for their own benefit, in contempt of every thing dear and sacred to their injured countrymen and fellow-citizens. But if the dangers of the popular plan above described, *great* and *formidable* as they are, should fail of their effect, surely, when contrasted with *no less* important advantages of the moderate system, they must unite all parties in its support! This system, we are told, as its first good effect, “would preserve the franchises of the whole mass of electors, leave the present (rotten) fabric untouched, and in every respect would be less remote from the habits, and the practice of the age.”—By which new mode of reformation, without the least

change of men or manners, we should put Corruption out of countenance upon her own dunghill, by a fresh recruit of public virtue from the counties. And why should we deprive a number of poor people of the exclusive right of selling and betraying their country, which, from long habit and privilege, they might think a great hardship, when we may as easily defeat the corrupt influence of the Crown over them, by creating another influence in favour of different masters and leaders? Honourable men! whose professions in behalf of liberty are well known, although they would avail themselves of the acts of tyrants to deprive their country of those natural and constitutional rights, which alone can give security both to liberty and property!!

To shew the candor and consistency of the Address, it informs us, in one place, that the hundred knights addition to the county representatives, would "in a great measure *redress their inferiority* to that of the boroughs." In the next paragraph it affirms, "that by this sole means the whole system of corruption would be overturned, and the constitution acquire a degree of permanent security which it never attained in any preceding period." And all this without displacing a single burgesses, whose corrupt majority is nearly double the number of the additional knights. This paradox, so confidently affirmed, surely wants explanation. They must make it appear that these knights will always be honest men, and in the interest of their country: that the influence of the Crown will not also find means to increase both in the boroughs and the counties, and even exceed these inadequate attempts of a party to controul its power. Could we even suppose corruption to be put to a stand by the moderate system, and all their new knights to prove honest, it does not appear that they would even then make a majority of parliament—the

the contrary is evident, if we may judge from the proportions of many years. But granting this, contrary to all appearances; what satisfaction could it give to the nation, whose general rights are thus given up, and usurped by a partial representation and their leaders, and a more fatal and decisive blow struck by this compromise, at the liberties of their country, than all former tyrants could effect? What security can these selfish reformers give to the kingdom that they *themselves* will not prove corrupt, and as ready to betray, upon occasion, the rights and property of England to the Crown, as those of America? It is far from a clear case that some of them, who have been the most active against the people's rights, are a whit more trust-worthy than the venal boroughs, for whose franchises they shew so great a tenderness, while they surrender without authority, and without remorse, the birthright of the great majority of their fellow-citizens. By which plan it is evident they mean to keep up the flame of party contests, the true source of all our calamities, which the general exertion of the whole people, in the recovery of their equal rights of election, would finally extinguish. There is no method to oppose a system of corruption effectually, but by putting it out of the power of Government to corrupt; nor any other way to do this but by making every man the guardian of his own rights, and thus binding the whole community by one common interest. Yet the Committee contend that the constitution may be restored without restoring the most essential part of it, the primary and fundamental rights of the people, from which the constitution and government are derived; and that freedom may be secured when the rights which make freedom are betrayed by party, and usurped by power. The moderate plan is evidently to curtail the power of the Crown, without restoring the rights of the people. Permanency of Govern-

ment does not coincide with their principles; for that can only result from regal despotism, or established democratic powers, which, having no motive for change within themselves, must remain till subdued by external violence. To talk of permanent security arising from a trimming expedient, calculated to promote instability, and to say this poor expedient "could induce the *people* to frame their associations on such precarious ground," are fallacious pretences. They were the enemies of the people who framed these Associations; and they will probably find that the exceptions to their principles are of greater moment than they affect to represent them, notwithstanding the Committees and their country friends have adopted and confirmed the plan, of which their leaders in parliament were the *real framers*.

R E M A R K S

ON THE

Second Address of the YORKSHIRE COMMITTEE.

L E T T E R III. and last.

HAD our American brethren, when the Crown attempted through a corrupt legislature to seize their property without their consent, adopted a temporizing plan, like this of Yorkshire, their rights and liberties had been lost for ever.—But *they* had no jealous nobles, over grown gentry, or stock-holders, to obstruct their rights by influence, or corrupt their virtue by example. Their interests as well as their conditions were happily *one*; and their exertions in support of a common cause have therefore been unanimous and decisive. —Had the people of Ireland, still more magnanimous, because acting against *both* the great powers of the state, meanly accepted the *best terms* their opponents would grant, they would never to Doomsday have been in possession of liberty or a free trade. The arms in their hands, with skill and spirit to use them in their own defence, were the argument that prevailed when the justice of their claims made no impression. They must apply it as strenuously to their own corrupt parliament, and their victory will be complete.—England alone, shame to her degeneracy! though equally injured or oppressed, robbed of her rights, and wantonly drained of her blood

blood and treasure, sinks under and kisses the rod of oppression. — She associates as if she had neither rights nor injuries, or not a due sense of either. Her once honest, and therefore intrepid sons, instead of emulating the great and illustrious examples before their eyes, and uniting to crush a system of tyranny, are supplicating their own treacherous servants for the rights they betray; and this too at a time when our national calamities and resentment, co-operating with ministerial disgraces and apprehensions, must have ensured success, had not the selfish fears of funded property, and the more selfish interest of party, frustrated the decided plans of popular union and defence:—plans of wisdom as well as justice, that would restore the spirit with the forms of the constitution, and effectually cure the evils arising from corrupt influence and partial representation. Whereas the moderate plan of the aristocracy, and the landed interest, is a plan of personal security and party advantage. And the ground of this frivolous, meek reformation, is the claim that those nobles and gentry make to the *landed property*. *Their dead property*, they would persuade us, is of more value and consequence than all the *living*, and therefore should give the law to representation.—They do not consider that uncultivated land is not property—That gold in the mine is not property.—The idea is complex, not simple. In one case it includes the skill and labour by which land is cultivated to its various produce; and therefore gives an equal claim of property to the plowman, the farmer, and the landlord. In the other, it takes in the numerous arts of the community, by whose united industry money passed into general circulation, and, being thus rendered the common measure of all other property, becomes important property itself. And therefore all who contribute to the acquirement and circulation of it, for

for the public benefit and service, are equally useful and important to the state with the immediate holders and possessors, and equally entitled on the ground of *property*, as well as natural rights, to representation among the deputies of the people. It is, in fact, labour, industry, and arts, that are the never-failing sources of all legal property to individuals, and of revenue to states. Shall these then be deemed *no property* themselves, that *give being to all other property*? that call the grain from the furrow, the ore from the mine, and launch out in perilous adventure upon the mighty waters? Shall *their* rights be left at the mercy of others, by whose strength and valour the rights and properties of kingdoms are gained and secured? Shall we be told by exalted patriotism, that "*every blade of grass*" in a free country is represented? and shall *men* be held cheaper than grass? Does the freehold rise spontaneously out of the soil, or from the sweat of the plowman's forehead?

Landed property is not absolutely such, but in a limited sense.—The landlord, by whatever tenure it is held, is but a kind of steward or trustee in the public behalf. He cannot compel the cultivation of it, which alone gives it value; nor can he lawfully cause it to lie uncultivated at his own pleasure, because this would be equally hostile to the laws of God and government, which call upon man to encrease and multiply, and replenish the earth, as far as the means of subsistence can be obtained.—The poor have therefore a right and a property in the lands, as well as the rich, and a common interest in their cultivation and produce. The land is the inheritance of all the people, by a natural claim which supercedes all civil titles. It can no more be *appropriated* than the sea or the air, and consequently is the least perfect of all property, and the least entitled to convey that power and influence over a community

munity which landlords are apt to assume. There is nothing so truly property as the produce of personal labour, whether of mind or body. Nor is there any kind of property so respectable to the public, or so well entitled to influence in the state and nation, because infinitely most beneficial to both.

The landed property, strictly speaking, is nothing more than the overplus produce of labour very inadequately paid: and though the civil distinctions in society may render it necessary that the greater part of the harvest should go to the support of these distinctions and subordinations, yet surely toil and industry demand something more than the scanty gleanings. They call for that share of the produce which may impart a reward equal to their service, and a degree of comfort in proportion to their state and condition. And, above all, they demand the free enjoyment of this as a *right* of nature and justice; and while they cheerfully administer to the pride and luxury of superiors, they have a right to guard their own independence, as free citizens, and to spurn with honest indignation at every kind of vassalage, which influence might attempt to gain over them, under the false notion of *obligation*. Equal rights and mutual obligations establish the claim of equal independence—and this cannot be maintained without the exercise of equal franchises and privileges, under the general character of free citizens.

Let the friends of the people's rights, which are the *essence* of their free constitution, take care how they are duped by the arts of assuming men, who would make brute earth property, without cultivation, and give a dignity to grass, or even to barren fields, which they deny to their fellow-citizens, whose skill and labour give *value* to one, and bread to the other. The lords of the soil have generally so little regard for the creators of the produce, on which
their

their proud distinctions of superiority are founded, that they will never suffer them to possess any greater civil rights, if they can prevent it, than shall render them fit instruments in their struggles with the Crown for power, and shall keep both them and their property at the disposal of their lordly spoilers. — They will never depend upon popular favour for power, if they can obtain it from the Crown by time-serving accommodation, or a small sacrifice of private principles, or public rights, as recent instances abundantly prove. They will have a constituent body, if possible, neither decidedly in the power of the Crown, nor too devoted to the Nation; but just such a weight in the popular scale as shall at all times put the balance in their hands, and give them the ascendancy over both. This is evidently the object which they and their connections, the landed gentlemen of *their* Committees, are contending for, upon the principle I have stated; that, by dexterously trimming betwixt the Crown and People, they may keep both in a state of dependance upon themselves, and by occasionally appearing devoted to each, they may dupe them both, and serve the interests of neither. And thus the national evils will be farther than ever from a cure. They will be fixed beyond the power of redress, unless the Crown, to get rid of the tyranny of Aristocratic Faction, should either attempt to become despotic, and thus compel them to unite with the people; or else, by favouring the popular plans of reform, and restoring the rights of election, should choose rather to govern under the constitutional controul of an independent parliament, and rely for support upon the disinterested loyalty of the Commons, rather than the rival fidelity of the Peers. — Let the people therefore be on their guard, who associate for *their own rights*, not to promote the intrigues of a party.

They have been already forewarned that the chiefs and leaders of it are by their *situation* no less *rivals to them* than to the Crown. Let them resolve upon an effectual reformation, or none. They had better have *no* representation, than a mere nominal one, that is to serve the purposes either of the Crown or Nobles. If it be not efficiently to *restore the rights*, and guard the liberty and property of the nation, a borough representation is as good as a county one; a septennial election, of what is called a parliament, as good as a triennial.—The only point to be considered by the people, I mean the *great unfranchised majority*, is such a reform as will give the nation a decided and permanent controul upon the Government, by rendering Parliament truly its representative, great council, and guardian of all its rights. These great ends can only be obtained by equal representation and annual parliaments.—The wit of man can devise no other means out of the reach of influence and corruption.

Let this point be the sole object of association and reformation. It is a point that admits of no qualifying medium, or plans of *moderation*. To balance here, is to betray. Let this therefore be the test of all associating bodies, to distinguish the *people* from *partizans*, who, being devoted to a middle power, are for a moderate reform, as best suited to its nature and interest.

From such Associations and Committees let the great, uncorrupt body of the people stand aloof, and either choose other Committees, or else abandon the design altogether.—The Committees that carried the reform for Ireland are not under the lead of a *state party*. They consist of citizens of middle rank and fortune, whose ambition does not prompt them to aspire after dominion over their brethren; who scorn to sacrifice the greater part of their

their countrymen to a moderate reform, and the ambition of a few. They are therefore worthy the exalted name of true Patriots — they will possess the entire confidence and esteem of their country, and be entitled to the veneration of all succeeding ages.

THE END.

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THE END